only adherents of the Orthodox religion might hold land, and the following year the writing of Lithuanian in Latin characters was forbidden. In 1894 Catholics were forbidden to hold any position, however small, in the central or local administrative services. None the less, the end of the century saw the foundation of a nationalist movement, led by Dr. Basanavicius, and the acquisition by the peasantry of a certain amount of land in small-holdings through the establishment of land banks and co-operative societies. In 1904 the law forbidding the printing of the Lithuanian language in Latin characters was repealed, and the flood of nationalist literature increased in volume.

In the other Provinces the situation of the peasants was even worse than in Lithuania, owing to the presence of the Baltic Barons, who were always loyal subjects of the Tsars, and who from the outset took a leading part in the administration of the Russian Empire. Under Russian rule the Barons secured the restoration of all privileges of which they had been deprived under the Swedish régime; moreover, they now created a closed corporation, consisting of 172 families which alone had the right to own land. Various attempts made by successive Tsars to improve the lot of the peasants were frustrated by the Barons, and serious rebellions were put down in 1783–4 and again in 1802. After the latter, Alexander I issued an ordinance in 1804 limiting serfdom, but its effects were nullified by the Barons. Laws abolishing personal serfdom altogether in Estonia (1816), Courland (1817), and Livonia (1819)[1] did little to improve matters, since freedom was of little use to peasants with no claim either to tenancy or ownership of land. In 1849, however, Alexander II enacted a new Agrarian Law abolishing forced labour and providing for the purchase or hire of certain lands by the peasant communes. Under Alexander III (1881–94) a determined policy of Russification was initiated, aimed as much at the German as at the native population; indeed, the later native movement of 1905 may be traced largely to the indirect encouragement which it now received from the Russian Government's anti-German policy. Russian law and police organization were substituted for the existing German system, and the Russian language was made compulsory in schools. On the other hand, Letts and Estonians were allowed to hold Government posts. Towards the end of the century, too, there was an improvement in the material status of the peasantry; the Russian railways brought trade to the ports of Riga and Libau, and in the towns a small proletarian class grew up which was ripe for the spread of revolutionary ideas. As in Lithuania, nationalist movements were set on foot, and Young Lett and Estonian parties were formed.

These movements, in all three countries, were quick to exploit the

[1] The first emancipation of serfs in the whole Empire was in the Baltic Provinces.

1: Anonymous U-4 (no date) 1938 RB1 Baltic States RB1

186 668 weakening of the Russian control which resulted from Russia's defeat by Japan; the revolution which spread throughout the Empire in 1905 had its repercussions in the Baltic Provinces. In Latvia and Estonia there were peasant risings which developed into *jacqueries* of a peculiarly savage character; harvests were burnt, agricultural machines were destroyed, and considerable damage was done to the large German-Balt and ecclesiastical estates. In Latvia the rising was not only the work of the peasantry, but also of the Social-Democratic party and of a nationalist revolutionary movement known as the *Savieniba*. Petitions were addressed to the Russian Government for universal franchise, freedom of the press and of assembly, the right to teach Lettish in the schools, &c.; and a [665] Provisional Revolutionary Government was established in Riga. In Lithuania two congresses were summoned to meet simultaneously in Vilna on December 4. 1905; one, consisting of representatives of all the Lithuanian associations, elected Dr. Basanavicius as its president, and voted a resolution demanding the creation of an autonomous Lithuania within ethnographic limits. The other, a congress of the Peasant Union which had been founded by a certain Gabrys, decided not to pay any taxes, to dismiss Russian teachers and pro-Russian municipal authorities, and to establish Lithuanian courts.

661 The disturbances were finally suppressed with the utmost ruthlessness by Russian troops, with the assistance of the German Barons; 3,000 Letts were said to have been tried by court martial, about half their number being sentenced to death. The promises made by the Tsar in the stress of the emergency were not kept, or kept only in part, although each of the Provinces was allowed to send representatives to the Russian Duma which was now brought into existence. [167] Under the Stolypin Government severe measures of repression were introduced; many of the nationalist leaders, such as Karl Ulmanis in Latvia and Konstantin Paets in Estonia, were driven into exile, and a system of colonization was introduced with the object of encouraging a German 'non-native' class of small-holders which would [186] tend to support the *status quo*. None the less, in spite of the Russian Government's repressive policy, the national spirit which had failed to carry the day in 1905 survived, in one form or another, until the world upheaval in 1914 provided the occasion for a fresh outburst of activity.

II. THE WORLD WAR AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE INDEPENDENT STATES

726 Four factors contributed to the making of the new Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania during the World War: the fall of the Russian Empire; the German occupation of the border provinces

1: Anonymous U-4 (no date)1938 RB1 Baltic States RB1
Estonia

726 Germans and repel the Bolshevik invasion. Without the assistance,
648 inadequate though it was, of the Allied Powers, they could hardly have succeeded in establishing their independence.

1. The Fall of the Imperial Government in Russia, 1917

648 It seems clear that, in the days following the March Revolution
● 186 and the establishment of the Provisional Government in Russia in the spring of 1917, none of the Baltic Provinces contemplated or desired complete detachment from Russia, although they certainly seized the opportunity of making a bid for a measure of autonomy and for much-needed reforms. It was the Bolshevik Revolution at the end of the year that not only enabled, but even forced, them to go farther and to demand complete independence.

648 *Estonia.* The Estonians, who at the time of the March Revolution
186 were as yet free from German occupation, naturally profited the most by the new situation. At the request of their leaders, Prince
642 Lvov issued a decree or 'Special Law' on April 12 granting local autonomy to Estonia, including the island of Oesel and the northern half of Livonia, where the population was Estonian; the old *Landtag* and other local bodies were replaced by a purely titular High Commissioner, to be appointed by the Provisional Government, and it was provided that an Estonian National Council and subordinate local bodies should be elected by universal, direct, secret, and proportional suffrage. The National Council was to draft a constitution for approval by an All-Russian Constituent Assembly. The provisional Government appointed M. Jaan Poska, the mayor of Reval, as High Commissioner, and by a further decree of July 5, 1917, provided for the elections to the National Council on July 7–8. In the Council, which met on July 14 and elected M. Konstantin Paets as its president, the bourgeois parties and the Labour Group held 60 per cent. of the seats, the Social-Democrats and Social-Revolutionaries making up the remaining 40 per cent. In view of the increasingly serious military situation, the Estonian Administration also obtained permission from Petrograd, in the autumn, to organize Estonian contingents under their own officers.

When the Provisional Government gave way before the Bolshevik *coup d'état* in November 1917, the Estonian National Government, taking advantage of Trotsky's declaration of the right of self-determination for dissident nationalities, proclaimed complete political independence of Russia on November 28. The Proclamation[1] also provided for the immediate election of a Constituent Assembly and for the delegation of the Council's powers, 'during the interruption

[1] For text see M. W. Graham, *New Governments of Eastern Europe* (I. Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1928), p. 646.

of its sessions', to a Committee of Elders and to the Administration. The Baltic Barons, on the other hand, declared themselves the sole authorized representatives of the people, proclaimed the definite separation of Estonia from Russia, and appealed to Germany for military aid against the Bolsheviks.

The immediate consequence of the Proclamation of November 28 was the temporary arrest of M. Paets and the dispersal of the National Council by the Bolsheviks, who, however, allowed the elections to the Constituent Assembly to take place during January 1918, in the hope of getting a majority of votes for their own candidates. When it became clear that they would not do so, a civil war broke out which was only ended by the arrival of the German armies in February. On February 24, the single day left to them between the flight of the Bolsheviks and the coming of the Germans, the Committee of Elders seized the opportunity to promulgate a manifesto reaffirming Estonia's independence as a Republican State, defining her frontiers, and instituting a Provisional Government under M. Paets. The German occupation during the following months postponed all further constitutional development until after the Armistice of November 11, 1918.

Latvia. The history of the Lettish nationalist movement up to the signature of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918 ran a somewhat similar course, and thereafter suffered a similar temporary eclipse until the Armistice was signed; for, although the southern half of what is now Latvia, with the exception of Latgale, was from the summer of 1915 onwards under German occupation, Lettish nationalists in the northern half and in Petrograd were able to conduct negotiations with the Imperial and Provisional Governments in Russia, and later to defy the Bolshevik authorities in much the same way as did the Estonian leaders, though with rather less success.

Towards the end of the Imperialist régime, when half the inhabitants of Courland were refugees in Russia, the Lettish deputies of the Duma, together with representatives of the exiled Letts, among them J. Čakste and Z. A. Meierovics, formed a Latvian Refugees' Committee in Petrograd, which tried to obtain promises of autonomy and reform from the Government. When the Provisional Government assumed authority in the spring of 1917, they were urged to establish an autonomous administrative district consisting of southern Livonia, Courland, and parts of Vitebsk; less amenable to Lettish than to Estonian entreaties, they did, however, issue decrees appointing new and more democratic-minded governors and permitting elections to local government bodies in the unoccupied districts.

In Latvia, as in Estonia, the Bolshevik Revolution precipitated

matters. On November 16, 1917, representatives of all parties in the unoccupied territory, except the Bolsheviks, met at Walk (in Livonia) and formed a Latvian National Council. Complete independence was implicit, though not explicit, in the declaration of the Council that Latvia was an autonomous unit whose status, and whose domestic and foreign policy, could only be decided by a Latvian Constituent Assembly. Meanwhile, in December, M. Karl Ulmanis and the other Lettish leaders, who had been working under cover in the occupied territory, formed a secret democratic *bloc* in Riga, consisting of all except the Germanophil and Bolshevik groups, which made a declaration similar to that of the National Council at Walk.

The Bolshevik reply to such action was to abolish the local government bodies set up by the Provisional Government, to issue new electoral decrees which excluded the bulk of the peasantry—as being counter-revolutionary in their outlook—from the franchise, to suppress the National Council, and to establish Red Guards throughout the unoccupied districts. But their military situation was becoming desperate; the Germans were advancing, and negotiations for Brest-Litovsk were in process. The Latvian nationalists took courage; on January 5, 1918, the Lettish leader, M. Janis Goldmanis, reaffirmed before the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, convened in Petrograd, the resolutions of the National Council at Walk. The Council itself met again on January 15 in Petrograd to declare Courland, South Livonia, and Latgale an independent democratic Republic, and to create administrative machinery and an embryo Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Almost immediately France granted *de facto* recognition to the new Latvian Government.

[727] By the end of February, however, the whole of Livonia was under German occupation, and the Brest-Litovsk Treaty recognized a German protectorate in Courland and a temporary German 'police occupation' in Livonia. The nationalist movement was driven to ground until after the Armistice, although, in July 1918, the National Council met to proclaim Latvia's independence under an international protectorate, and to send MM. Čakste and Meierovics and other representatives abroad to secure recognition and support from the Allied Powers.

Lithuania. Since practically the whole of Lithuania was in German occupation from the autumn of 1915 onwards, the movement for independence developed there on somewhat different lines from the Latvian and Estonian movements; it was less affected by the political and military history and military fortunes of Russia than by those of Germany. Tolerance of its existence and concessions to its aspirations had to be won, not so much from the Provisional Government or the Bolsheviks, as from the German military author-

[1918 --Analyst]

ities. At first it must have seemed possible to the Lithuanian deputies in the Duma, who, early in 1917, organized a Lithuanian National Council in Petrograd to demand political autonomy, that Russia might yet prove strong enough to protect, and generous enough to grant autonomy to, her border provinces; for, although after the fall of the Imperial Government they notified their compatriots in both German and Russian Lithuania, without permission of the Provisional Government, of the existence of the Lithuanian National Council, and appointed a provisional administrative committee to deal with Lithuanian affairs in Russia, yet, at a general conference of Lithuanians in Petrograd some months later, while extremists were demanding complete independence and the convocation of a Constituent Assembly, the more moderate elements were still in favour of a *rapprochement* with the Provisional Government. The latter, however, by ignoring their advances and refusing to make any promises such as had been made to Finland, Poland, or Estonia, lost the last opportunity of keeping the Lithuanian nationalist movement within their control. Finally, when the Bolshevik Government suppressed the Lithuanian National Council, a conference, attended by all but the extreme Left parties, was organized at Voronezh to take its place; this defined the frontiers and outlined the constitutional programme of a new independent Lithuanian Republic, demanded the immediate evacuation of the German armies and free access to the Baltic Sea, and decided to bring its claim to the attention of the Allied Powers.

2. The German Occupation

After suffering the ravages of the retreating Russian army, the Baltic Provinces were subjected, for a period varying from three years in Lithuania and Courland to nearly a year in Estonia and Livonia, to all the miseries of a German military occupation, with its accompaniments of rigorous requisitioning and political terrorization. In spite of its devastating economic effects, however, the German occupation probably saved the Provinces from irretrievable submergence in the Soviet Union, and, as things turned out, by keeping the Bolsheviks out, made independence ultimately possible when the Germans in their turn should have suffered military defeat by the Allies.

Estonia and Latvia. The failure, during this period, of the efforts of the German military authorities, supported by the German-Baltic Barons, to threaten or cajole the peoples of any of the three Provinces into adopting some form of federation with Germany, is an indication that the Baltic races felt that they had more to fear from German than from Russian domination. The German plans

727 included the creation of a Duchy of Courland and a Duchy of Estonia
648 and Livonia in personal union with the Crown of Prussia, and the organization of extensive German colonization in those Provinces. To this end, in each Province the old *Landtag* and *Landesrat*, consisting of representatives of the Baltic Barons, were hastily revived. On March 8, 1918, the *Landesrat* of Courland invited the Kaiser to accept the Grand-ducal crown of Courland; the invitation was graciously accepted. An unsuccessful attempt was made to persuade the district Elders of Estonia and Livonia, summoned to a conference at Riga on April 10 for the purpose, to consent to union with the Prussian Crown; the fear of German colonization was too strong. M. Konstantin Paets, the chief organizer of resistance to such a scheme, was imprisoned in a Polish concentration camp. In default of popular consent, Baron Dellingshausen, the leader of the Baltic Barons in Estonia, sent a request for union to the Kaiser, who con-
[423] veyed his 'consent' to it on April 21. In July 1918 agrarian regulations were issued providing for a Colonization Union in Courland, at whose disposal the Baltic Barons placed a third of their landed property for the purpose of fresh German colonization: all private land agreements for the last thirty years were to be annulled, without any provision being made for expropriated peasants.

728 *Lithuania.* In Lithuania, hoping to make capital out of the Russian
649 Provisional Government's unsympathetic attitude towards the
● 186 Lithuanian nationalists, and with a view to creating a body which
[668] would lend itself to the furtherance of annexation schemes, the German authorities rashly permitted a nationalist movement to take shape in the autumn of 1917. Immediately after the Russian evacuation of Vilna, a conference of over 200 leaders, selected by an organizing committee, met there and passed a resolution that Lithuania should become an independent democratic State within her ethnographic frontiers, and that a Constituent Assembly should be convened. The conference appointed, for the conduct of affairs in the interim period, a National Council or *Taryba*, consisting of twenty-six members, including six representatives of minorities, with M. Antanas Smetona as its president. Under German pressure, the *Taryba* adopted further resolutions on December 11, which, while claiming the reconstitution of an independent State with Vilna as its capital, omitted all mention of a Constituent Assembly, and even asked for German aid during the period of reconstruction in the form of a 'perpetual and solid alliance' with the German Empire. In a rescript of March 23, 1918, the Kaiser granted *de jure* recognition of Lithuanian independence on the basis of the December resolutions; but by this time the *Taryba*, realizing the character of the peace negotiations with Russia at Brest-Litovsk, to which they had been refused per-

1: Anonymous U-4 (no date)1938 RBl Baltic States RBl
Lithuania

mission to send a delegate, had made a new official declaration of Lithuanian independence on February 16, 1918, this time on the basis of the original Vilna resolutions of September 1917, with a renewed demand for a Constituent Assembly.

The German General Staff now conceived the idea of a personal union of Lithuania with Saxony, under a monarchical government. In order to thwart this plan, and under pressure from the clerical party in Germany, the *Taryba*, on June 14, 1918, invited the Catholic Duke William of Urach—alleged to be a Württemberg descendant of the old Lithuanian king Mindaugas—to ascend the throne of an independent Lithuania as Mindaugas II. The invitation was accepted, in spite of the strong opposition of a section of the *Taryba* itself, not to mention that of the German General Staff. But, with military defeat growing daily more certain, the latter's authority was beginning to wane, and on October 20 the new Chancellor, Prince Max of Baden, informed the *Taryba* that it had been decided to delegate full legislative and administrative power to a Lithuanian Government, as soon as it should be constituted, and to remove the German occupying forces as soon as possible. The *Taryba*, therefore, on November 2, withdrew the invitation to the Duke of Urach, leaving the form of government to be decided by the future Constituent Assembly. Meanwhile, constituting itself as the legislative body, it elected a triumvirate, consisting of MM. Smetona, Staugaitis, and Šilingas, who on November 5 invited M. Voldemaras to form a non-party Cabinet and to negotiate with the various nationalities.

3. The German Evacuation and the Bolshevik Invasion

As soon as the Armistice of November 11, 1918, was signed, the leaders in each country set about the task of organizing their respective administrations, consolidating the political independence of the new Governments, and finally drafting constitutions.

The Estonian National Council met on November 20, 1918, after nine months' rustication; M. Pæts was released from imprisonment, and the Government set up under him on February 24 was confirmed in its authority.

In Latvia, M. Karl Ulmanis's democratic *bloc* was now joined by the members of the Latvian Refugees' Committee and of the Latvian National Council from Petrograd, and an all-Latvian Council of State was formed of some 100 members of all parties, except the Social-Revolutionaries and Bolsheviks.[1] The Assembly met at Riga on November 18, 1918, elected M. Čakste as its president, and formed

[1] About two-thirds of the seats, which were allotted according to the votes received by these parties in the elections under the Provisional Government, were held by peasants and workers, while the remaining third of the members were merchants, manufacturers, and representatives of the national minorities.

1: Anonymous U-4 (no date) 1938 RB1 Baltic States RBJ
Lithuania

563 671 tongue, without prejudice to the obligatory teaching of Lithuanian as an additional language. Special clauses (Nos. 7 and 8) extended freedom to the Jews in all educational and religious matters. All persons born in Lithuania after the date of the Declaration, and unable to claim another nationality by birth, were recognised as Lithuanian nationals. The Declaration reproduced the 'guarantee article' of the Polish and other minority treaties, and the ordinary minority procedure was adopted.[1]

563 798 In spite of this good beginning, the treatment of minorities in Lithuania has not improved with the years. Nor was any great effort made to implement the promises of cultural autonomy described above. An autonomous organization established by the Jewish community in 1919, consisting of a National Council and a number of local branches, was abolished by a Christian-Democratic Government in 1924, and no other national minority has so far successfully availed itself of the right of cultural autonomy which it is supposed, in theory, to enjoy.

563 ●186 871 During the short period of parliamentary government the minorities had already begun to suffer from the ultra-nationalism of the Lithuanian parties, which was accentuated, especially with regard to the Poles, by the interminable Vilna controversy. After the establishment of the Voldemaras dictatorship in 1926, nationalist feeling ran higher than ever, and forty-eight Polish schools were shut. In August 1929 there were reports in the *Berliner Tageblatt* of pogroms against the Jews in Kaunas—always a centre of unrest owing to its high percentage of Jewish, German, and Polish inhabitants—and at Slobodke and Shanz, and there were general complaints that the State exercised too much control over the minority schools. Similar complaints were made, later on, against the Tubelis Administration, although in actual fact most of the Polish schools had been reopened. In August 1934 anti-Jewish outbursts occurred in Kaunas and elsewhere.

Since Herr Hitler's advent to power there has been a considerable amount of German propaganda in Lithuania with the particular object of securing the reincorporation of Memel in Germany.[2] The

[1] Jewish petitions and memoranda were submitted in December 1921 and in June and September 1925. The Polish Government made several complaints of the general treatment of the Polish minority in Lithuania in 1921 and 1922; in 1924–5 a number of petitions from the 'Committee of Polish Exiles', referring to linguistic, educational, and agrarian reform questions, were dealt with by the League Council. In August 1928, 34 Russians submitted a complaint relating to expropriation, which was considered by the Council in its 55th–56th Sessions, but which, in view of the remedial measures taken by the Lithuanian Government, was finally dismissed in January 1930. (See *League of Nations Official Journal*, xi, No. 8, p. 967.) A similar petition from 21 Ukrainians in November 1927 was also dismissed by the Council on September 8, 1928. (See *League of Nations Official Journal*, ix, No. 10, p. 1493.)

[2] The question of the minority in Memel is dealt with below, pp. 98–100.

1: Anonymous U-4 (no date)1938 RB1 Baltic States RB1
Lithuania
Latvia

grievances of the German minority itself have been concerned chiefly with the exclusive use of the Lithuanian language in schools, and with the Government's policy of trying to compel German children to attend Lithuanian schools. In 1936 the Poles joined with the Germans in protesting against such measures, and against the restrictive supervision of the press.

Latvia. The national minorities in Latvia formed a larger proportion of the total population[1]—amounting in 1930 to 23·4 per cent.—and played a correspondingly more important part in political life than did those in Estonia or Lithuania. The majority of the Lettish population are small peasants, with a certain number of artisans and labourers and a very small middle class. The large Russian minority also consists chiefly of peasants—many of them refugees—who are settled almost entirely in the frontier districts, whereas the Jews have tended, as usual, to concentrate in the towns. The German minority is made up mainly of expropriated landlords and of merchants, over two-thirds of whom live in Riga. The Poles, most of whom belong to the small landowning and middle classes, tend, like the Russians, to congregate in the border districts.

The Latvian Constitution of 1922 contained no reference to the position of the minorities, although the guarantee of their cultural and national rights had been one of the planks of the 'Political Platforms of the National Council' in 1918. A law of December 6, 1919, however, providing that Lettish should be the language in the law-courts, permitted the use of German and Russian where necessary.[2] Moreover, on December 18, 1919, a 'Law of Scholastic Autonomy' was enacted, providing for the establishment of a council for each of the more important minorities, to have complete control in respect of the types of schools set up, the kind of instruction given, and other educational matters.[3] A specified proportion of the Budget was

[1] TABLE 3. *Population of Latvia According to Race.*

Race	1920		1930		1935	
	Number	*Percentage of total*	*Number*	*Percentage of total*	*Number*	*Percentage of total*
Lettish	1,138,536	80·4	1,394,957	73·4	1,472,612	75·50
Russian (including White Russian)	118,023	8·9	237,809	12·5	233,366	11·97
Jewish	60,892	4·3	94,388	4·9	93,479	4·79
German	45,315	3·2	69,855	3·7	62,144	3·19
Polish	31,154	2·2	59,374	1·4	48,949	2·51
Others (including Lithuanians and Estonians)	14,161	1·0	33,593	0·9	39,952	2·04

[2] This privilege was confirmed by a circular of the Ministry of Justice on December 4, 1920, and again by a pronouncement of the Supreme Court of Appeal in January 1931.

[3] Such councils, while acting within a special Minorities Department of the Ministry of Education, would each include a chairman and three other delegates nominated by the

1: Anonymous U-4 (no date) 1938 R21 Baltic States RB1
Latvia

563 877

allotted to each minority for educational purposes, and the compulsory elementary schools were to be maintained by the State, while no obstacles were to be placed in the way of the establishment of any number of private schools. Up till now such councils have been formed for the German, Russian, White Russian, Jewish, and Polish groups. The Germans appear to be satisfied with the system, but the Russians complain that they receive less than their fair share of the State subsidies, and that the local government bodies, which are composed chiefly of Letts, do not provide enough Russian schools.[1]

563 648

In response to the League's request for a declaration guaranteeing minority rights, Latvia only consented, after protracted negotiations, to make a general Declaration, on July 7, 1923; this proposed that the subject should be regarded as closed, while acknowledging the League Council's right to take up the question again if at any time the situation of the minorities should not 'appear to correspond to the general principles laid down in the various minority Treaties', and admitting the right of the minorities themselves to send petitions to the Council.[2] Latvia also accepted the principle of the League's guarantee, but not the obligatory jurisdiction of the Permanent Court of International Justice, in place of which she agreed that, if necessary, an advisory opinion might be obtained.

563 • 186

The situation of the minorities in general, while very favourable under the earlier Agrarian Ministries—so much so that they frequently had representatives in the Cabinet—on the whole deteriorated gradually from about 1929 onwards. In August of that year the Celmins Ministry, which had decided to grant a subsidy towards the erection of a German war memorial, was only saved from defeat

minority concerned. The chairman would represent his nationality in all cultural questions, and would participate in an advisory capacity in the sessions of the Cabinet whenever those questions were under consideration.

[1] TABLE 4. *Minorities and Education in Latvia.*

563 877

Type of school	Year	Total no. of schools	Lettish	Language of Instruction: Great Russian	White Russian	German	Polish	Jewish	Lithuanian	Estonian	Diverse
Primary	1928-9	1,931	1,410	229	31	91	34	80	7	4	45
,,	1935-6	1,907	1,461	173	13	77	31	67	11	4	80
Secondary	1928-9	157	81	14	3	13	5	22	1	..	2
,,	1935-6	122	87	8	..	10	3	12	1	..	2
		students									
University	1928-30	8,227	6,865	171	..	418	36	726	46	19	3
,,	1935-6	7,203	6,103	195	..	334	22	510	30	17	4

[2] Since the Declaration of 1923, only one petition has been lodged (by German nationals) against Latvia, in April 1925, relating to agrarian reform. Previous to it there had been two German petitions on the same subject, in November 1920 and February 1921, and one Jewish petition relating to general minority treatment in September 1921. None of these petitions was brought before the Council.

by the Socialist Opposition through the German minority's eleventh-hour renunciation of the subsidy. In the following November a Bill tabled by Socialist initiative was passed, depriving members of the national minorities of the right to benefit from the distribution of confiscated lands to ex-servicemen, on the ground that they had not shared in the struggle for Latvian independence. These moves, which were primarily designed to overthrow the Government by creating a strong nationalist feeling, were regarded by the German minority as an insult aimed directly at themselves, and they proceeded to withdraw their representative, Herr Berent, from the Cabinet as a protest.

In 1931, under the bourgeois-conservative Ulmanis Government formed in May, and later under the nationalist-bourgeois Skujenieks Ministry of November, there were further attacks on the privileges of the minorities. A new law prescribing the exclusive use of Lettish in the *Saeima*[1] was rejected in December of that year, but an emergency decree issued in October deprived the Germans of all rights over Riga Cathedral, its museum, and its vicarages, which had been in their hands for over 700 years, a measure which aroused the more resentment since a proposal to this effect had already been rejected by the *Saeima* in the previous May and by a plebiscite held in the summer.

The Polish minority, too, came in for its share of attention in the autumn of 1931; the closing of six elementary Polish schools, the suppression of a Polish newspaper, the suspension of the Polish League of Catholic Youth and the Association of Latgalian Poles, and the latter's final dissolution, led to the resignation of one of the Polish deputies in the *Saeima*. But, when the wave of strong nationalist feeling due to the elections had subsided, conditions improved somewhat, and in March 1932 the Poles were allowed full cultural autonomy again.

Under the dictatorship established in May 1934 the privileges of the minorities sustained a fresh series of assaults. Two decrees were issued in June; the first providing that, in families where either of the parents was of Lettish nationality, the children must attend Lettish schools, and that, where the father and mother belonged to different national minorities, the father's nationality, rather than the language spoken in the household, was to be the decisive factor; the second prescribing Lettish as the sole written or spoken language in all State and communal services, except in districts at least half of whose inhabitants were registered at the last census as speaking a language other than Lettish. In July the German Autonomous

[1] Hitherto, both Russian and German had customarily been spoken in the *Saeima*, in addition to Lettish, though there was no law specifically permitting their use.

642 necessary for its formation led to the frequent prolongation of political crises by interminable party bargaining.

565 665 It is important to bear in mind that the vast majority of the inhabitants of these countries are, and have always been, peasants. Under the Tsarist régime they were ardently nationalist, and, as long as the supremacy of the Baltic Barons endured, there was also a marked tendency to Socialism. After the establishment of independence, the agrarian reforms energetically prosecuted by all three States brought into existence a large new class of small peasant proprietors, and land-hunger, the chief incentive to revolution, was virtually abolished. The Agrarian parties grew steadily stronger at the expense of the Socialists and Centre groups,[1] while Communism —now that it was associated with Soviet Russia and all that Russian domination might involve—became practically extinct as a significant force.

Given, on the one hand, the state of parliamentary atrophy described above, with its probable accentuation of the economic and financial difficulties of the period, and, on the other hand, the increasing predominance of the Agrarian parties, influenced possibly by the success of the Pilsudski *coup* in May 1926 and the German National-Socialist victory in 1933, an outside observer might be tempted to describe what has happened in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as a victory, in each case, of the peasant parties over 642 the Socialists, or of Fascism over parliamentary anarchy. Each of 186 178 the dictatorships, it is true, depends largely on the prestige of one or two veteran statesmen, on the loyalty of the Army, and on the tacit acquiescence of the mass of the peasantry. It is also true, perhaps, that in each country an anti-foreign and anti-Semitic agrarian nationalism is becoming more and more pronounced, and, furthermore, that there is a common tendency on the part of the responsible leaders to favour the introduction of corporative institutions—although how far such an innovation would be likely to modify the existing concentration of powers it is as yet too soon to judge. But it would be misleading to stress the parallelism between the three States too much, or to conclude that the present authoritarian régimes employ the same methods and operate in the same interests in every case.

642 In Estonia, the Agrarian dictatorship of M. Paets was the last stage 578 of a race between the parliamentary groups and the extra-parliamentary and semi-Fascist organization, known as the 'Liberators'

[1] In Lithuania the strength of the Socialists never exceeded 17 per cent. of the whole *Seimas*; but in the other two countries the Left groups, although they were at first numerically stronger than the Agrarian parties and had played a prominent part in framing the Constitutions, participated in a quite disproportionately small number of Governments, and diminished in strength fairly steadily in successive elections.

League', to impose on the country their rival brands of constitutional reform; whereas in Latvia the protagonists were, on the one hand, the Agrarian party—itself accused of Fascism—with proposals for reform, and, on the other, the Socialists with an anti-Fascist but otherwise unconstructive programme. Moreover, the dictatorship in Estonia has operated more mildly, and departed less radically from constitutional principles, than its counterpart in Latvia.

Lithuania, again, had problems peculiar to herself. Here a religious issue cut across the straight fight between Nationalist-Agrarian and Socialist. Lithuanian nationalism demanded the restoration of Vilna; but the Vatican had recognized that province as a Polish diocese. The Christian-Democrats, who were as much a clerical as an agrarian or nationalist party, were therefore divided between two loyalties. The *coup d'état* of 1926 was executed by a group of officers in favour of the Nationalist party—a small Conservative group of landowners and industrialists—at a time when the Populists and Socialists were in office; the Christian-Democrats at first supported the Voldemaras dictatorship, owing largely to prolonged ill-feeling between the Nationalist Government and the Vatican, but they ended by going into permanent opposition, and under the Tubelis Administration were suppressed altogether. More recently the Memel dispute gave rise to some discontent, this time among the peasants, among whom there was a feeling that their interest in good trade relations with Germany was being sacrificed to a policy of extreme nationalism. None the less, the dictatorship has continued for nearly eleven years, and is only now beginning to show signs of modification; presumably, the pressing need for national unity, imposed first by the Vilna dispute and later by the Memel controversy, must be counted as the primary cause of the prolonged supremacy of a régime which appears to rest not so much—as in Estonia and Latvia—on its power to satisfy the needs of an important agricultural class, as on the support of the Army, the ability of a small group of intellectuals, and the immense personal prestige of President Smetona.

2. Estonia

Political Parties. The table of election results below[1] shows a striking shift of numerical strength from the Left and Centre parties to the Right, which consisted of the Agrarian party, or Peasants' Union, reinforced after 1923 by the New Farmers or 'Settlers'. These were the representatives of the new class of peasant proprietors created by the agrarian reforms, and became, in 1932, the left wing of a United Agrarian party.

The Agrarian party consisted chiefly of farmers who had owned

[1] See Table 8 at foot of next page.

1: Anonymus U-4 (no date) 1938 RB1 Baltic States RB1
Estonia

665 and formed the Workers' Party, or 'Kaawer-Socialist' group, secured
[196] six seats. In 1930 this group was dissolved and its seats distributed among the other parties, while the Communist party had already been declared illegal after a *putsch* engineered from Moscow in December 1924. The solidarity of the nation against Communism was illustrated by the energetic suppression of this *putsch* by General Laidoner, and the formation of a grand coalition of all the major parties, including the Social-Democrats, under Dr. Jaakson. Martial law, which had been proclaimed throughout the country, was thereafter retained permanently in certain frontier zones and on all railways; and, although during the following years plots were from time to time discovered, Communism never again got out of hand to the extent of being a national danger.

642 *Constitutional Reform.* As early as 1924 the question of constitutional revision was raised by Dr. Jaakson in his Ministerial Declaration immediately after the Communist *putsch*, when he suggested the desirability of separating the functions of the President of the State from those of the Prime Minister. Bills to that effect were unsuccessfully introduced in the Assembly by the parties of the Right in February 1925 and July 1926, while the Labour party tabled a
[666] separate Bill in 1926 for halving the number of deputies in the Assembly; in the same year the Assembly actually adopted a modification of the electoral law, requiring a deposit from every candidate and a minimum of two successful candidates for representation of any group in the Assembly.

668 The year 1930 saw the genesis of a speedily repressed peasant
672 'Lapuan' movement in South Estonia, somewhat on the lines of its Finnish prototype, but without the latter's anti-Communist character. This organization expressed its dissatisfaction with parliamentary 'absolutism', talked of a march on Tallinn, and proposed to petition for the reduction of the number of deputies and the diminution of their salaries. A far more important movement was set on foot in March 1931 by the Ex-service Men's Federation, which passed a resolution demanding the institution of a President of the State with extensive powers, an electoral system which allowed for votes for individuals instead of for lists, and the reduction of the number of deputies, with the threat that, if the Government did not accede to these requests within three months, the Federation would proceed to a popular referendum.

578 There now began a three-cornered struggle between the Agrarian
642 and Centre parliamentary groups, which favoured moderate reform; the Ex-servicemen—henceforth known as the 'Liberators'—who demanded far wider powers for the President of State than the former were willing to concede; and the Social-Democrats, who were opposed

2: Milosz S-5 (no date)1953 El Europe
Balth Countries KL

197 that two different languages entered into use there: the masters, that is the landholders, spoke German (in Estonia and Latvia) and Polish (in Lithuania) in part because the newcomers brought with them their own language and customs, and in part because the local nobility adopted them. The common people, however, spoke their native tongue and preserved their cultural heritage from a legendary past. After the First World War, these three countries ceased to be provinces of the Russian Tsardom and became independent. Radical agrarian reforms curbed the influence of the great landowners. The native tongues became the official languages, while literature and education restored popular traditions.

161 241 In 1939, the population of these three states numbered about six million, that is, a little more than the population of Chile, a little less than that of Sweden. They were agricultural countries whose economies were maintained by a well-organized exportation of bacon, eggs, butter, grain, and fowl to Western Europe. In this, as well as in other respects, they resembled Denmark. Whoever knows the patterns of farming life can easily picture the mode of existence of these Baltic regions. A widespread system of 511 cooperatives helped the farmer sell his products. His standard of living, judging by his appearance, his house and his diet, was higher than that of the Slavonic countries, 162 with the possible exception of Czechoslovakia. Most Es- 186 tonians and Latvians were Protestant; most Lithuanians, Catholic. All three nations were characterized by obstinate patriotism, or even chauvinism—which is understandable in terms of their hard past. Militarily, all three were defenseless.

175 648 The fate of these states was decided in the talks between Molotov and Ribbentrop. In the fall of 1939, Molotov demanded military bases; the Baltic governments hurried

21: Kolarz J-4 (no date) 1952 RI Soviet Union RI
Baltic Countries RBI

The Baltic
Ba. 186 563 3.11. 563

refugees in the Soviet Union not only occupied important posts in the Soviet state administration, but also kept alive their own local problems. They cultivated the memory of the ephemeral Soviet Republics which in 1918–19 had existed in parts of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia and prepared themselves for a fresh start. 'We shall never surrender to anybody the banner of Soviet Latvia' – said the Latvian communist Y. Krumin, in 1935 – 'the banner of the first dictatorship of the Latvian proletariat and we shall again carry this banner into the fight for a new Latvia which, freed from the previous mistakes and weaknesses, will victoriously conclude the great cause started in 1919'.[28]

As *émigrés* in the Soviet Union the Baltic communists analysed their mistakes in great detail, and admitted that they had failed to understand the importance of the national problem. During the short period in which they had been in power the Baltic communists had indeed been concerned only with the creation of an abstract 'workers' and 'peasants' State. They did not realize that problems of language and culture were of interest to workers and peasants as well and that the aspirations towards an Estonian, Latvian or Lithuanian national State could not be dismissed lightly as purely bourgeois conceptions.*

BALTIC IN FORM – RUSSIAN IN ESSENCE

Ba. 186 177.18

In 1940 the Soviet Government and the Baltic communists had their second start in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Have they shown since then that they have learned the lessons of the abortive experiments in 1918–19? Yes and no. They have paid lip-service to the national feelings of the three countries but have simultaneously violated their genuine national interests in the most flagrant way. The Soviet régime, it is true, no longer disregarded the national traditions of the Baltic peoples but 'readjusted' them so that they would fit into the general pattern of Russian State interests.

One particularly strong tendency was to accentuate whenever possible the anti-German aspects in the history and literature of the Baltic peoples, and, at the same time, completely to suppress any anti-Russian propen-

* The first Soviet Lithuania supplies an interesting example of the extent to which the communists ignored the national factor. The manifesto of the 'Provisional Revolutionary Workers and Peasants Government of Lithuania', set up in December 1918, mentioned only social and economic problems. The composition of the so-called Lithuanian Soviet Government itself showed that the Soviet power considered 'Lithuania' as a geographical setting for a multi-national State and not as a national State of the Lithuanians. The Government was made up of two Poles, two Jews and four Lithuanians, and it would have included Byelorussians had it been possible to find suitable Byelorussian communists in Vilna.

The chairman of the Lithuanian Soviet Government, V.S. Mitskevitch-Kansukas, later described as a serious political error the fact that Lithuanian communists did not adhere to the principle of national self-determination to the point of separation and had thus created the impression that the Lithuanian Soviet Government was simply another occupation government maintained in power by Red Army bayonets.[29]

[Cf. category 116, pp. 105-108; RL Sov. Union; 21: Kolarz – Analyst]

21: Kolarz J-4 (no date) 1952 R1 Soviet Union R1
Baltic Countries RR1

Ba. 177.18 /186

sities therein. These aims were most easily realized in the case of the Lithuanians, ample material being provided for their anti-German past by their struggle against the Teutonic Knights and above all by the Battle of Tannenberg (1410) when Lithuanians and Russians had fought on the same side.

Ba. [773]

In Latvia, Soviet authorities used for their own purposes the legend of the national hero, Lachplesis, fighting against the 'Black Knight'. According to the war-time interpretation of the legend, Lachplesis was a kind of guerilla leader who defeated the Germans; in the post-war period he appeared as the personification of the victorious Soviet power asserting itself against the forces of darkness and reaction. In Estonia, the Soviet régime made similar use of Kalev, the hero of the national epic, *Kalevipoeg*, whom Soviet propaganda represented as the champion of Russian-Estonian co-operation. This interpretation is based on a reference in the epic to a bridge which Kalev began to build across the Lake Peipus.

Ba. [738]

Soviet policy in the Baltic States can be characterized not only by the familiar official slogan, 'National in form, socialist in content', but also by the formula 'Baltic in form, Russian in essence'. Particularly since 1945 the Soviet régime has treated the Baltic States not only as Soviet provinces but also as part of the Russian living space. The influx of Russians into the Baltic Republics is important both in quantity and in quality. The Soviet Government has not been so clumsy as to appoint Russians to such posts as those of the Prime Ministers of the Baltic Republics or of the chairmen of the local Supreme Soviets. Even the first party secretaries are natives of the countries concerned. By a coincidence, however, their deputies are Russians in all three republics and there are many more Russians in responsible and influential party positions. Moscow also sent administrators, economic experts and skilled workers. On the other hand, the Baltic communists were unable to acquire any important posts in Moscow. After the annexation of the Baltic Republics the leaders of the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian communists were not admitted into the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party, but became only alternate members of that body.

S.U. [569]

Ba. [645]

The Russians not only occupied important key positions in the Baltic Republics as individuals but also assumed the status of a second State-nation in each. Russian was introduced as a State language on the same footing as Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian, and in the new coats of arms of the three Soviet Republics the motto, 'Workers of the World Unite', appeared in both the local and the Russian languages.